

ARTICLE 204

URBAN CHANGE

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STATUS

The Urban Change Article of the Detroit Master Plan includes framework policies and guidelines for the preservation and revitalization of the City of Detroit.

The City of Detroit, now an area of about 140 square miles, was founded and grew over a period of years, responding to the events and influences that mark the history of the City. Three major stages have been identified in the growth of Detroit. The "old City," generally lying within the Grand Boulevard, was built before 1900, without the benefit of building codes or zoning and subdivision controls, or a street plan. It is characterized by narrow lots, a congested street pattern, and a mixture of commercial and industrial uses within residential areas. The "middle City," generally lying between the Grand Boulevard and the industries located along the Detroit Terminal Railroad line, was built between 1900 and 1930. The "middle City" was developed and grew with the automobile industry, providing housing for the workers who were attracted by the giant new mass production factories. Most of the homes in this part of the city were built in accordance with a building code, and are structurally sound. However, as in the case of the "old City," the homes were built without zoning and subdivision controls, and mixed land uses, insufficient off-street parking, congested local streets, and deficient neighborhood services are common problems which detract from the quality of life in these neighborhoods.

The remaining part of Detroit, the "new City" lies generally between the "middle City" and the outer city limits. The

"new City" contains predominantly one-family homes, built on adequately sized lots, in accordance with a building code, and zoning and subdivision controls. The "new City" is served by supermarkets, shopping centers, and playgrounds and local recreation areas which were acquired by the City in accordance with the objectives of the Master Plan before the surrounding areas were completely developed. As in the case of the "middle City," neighborhoods in the "new City" were laid out on a grid-iron street pattern, and through traffic is common on many local streets.

The following sections of the Master Plan describe conservation and redevelopment framework policies that are specifically designed to relate to the needs of a city that developed and is now evolving in three stages. The policies of Section 204.0100 Conservation are addressed to the needs of the "middle" and "new" cities, while Section 204.0200 Redevelopment is addressed to the needs of the "old City."

Additional conservation and redevelopment programs and proposals that relate directly to the needs of the City for healthy, viable industrial and commercial development and the jobs, tax revenues, and services they provide were developed by the City Plan Commission in the same period as the following programs for residential areas. These industrial and commercial development programs were not adopted as city policy, but are available for reference use in Industrial Renewal (March 1956) and Commercial Renewal (February 1958), both published by the Detroit City Plan Commission.

204.0100 CONSERVATION

STATUS - The Detroit Housing Commission, the City Plan Commission, many other City Departments and a large number of citizens of the City cooperated through the Detroit Committee for Neighborhood Conservation and Improved Housing in the preparation of this portion of the Master Plan.

On May 10, 1955, (J. C. C., pp. 910-11) Common Council approved neighborhood conservation as a program concept, designated three neighborhoods as proposed conservation neighborhoods, and authorized the study of additional neighborhoods for submission to Council in the future. On June 19, 1956, (J. C. C. pp. 1301-2) Common Council adopted the Neighborhood Conservation Areas plan as part of the Master Plan, and on June 26, 1956 (J. C. C. pp. 1370-1) Common Council adopted a resolution requesting City departments to support a ten-year conservation program for the 55 neighborhoods, as described on the Neighborhood Conservation Areas map of the Detroit Master Plan, and found to need improvements of a conservation nature.

Common Council amended the Neighborhood Conservation Areas plan on May 14, 1968 (J. C. C., p. 963) to designate the Brush Park/Woodward East area bounded by Woodward, Mack, Chrysler Freeway, and Fisher Freeway for conservation, and on December 17, 1968 (J. C. C., p. 2982) to designate the G.R.O.W. area generally bounded by McGraw, Jeffries Freeway, Michigan Avenue, and West Grand Boulevard for conservation.

204.0101 Definition and Scope

Neighborhood conservation is an approach for encouraging the preservation and maintenance of Detroit's middle-aged neighborhoods, including almost 300,000 homes, more than half of Detroit's total housing stock. Many of these homes have years of useful life remaining, and require only minor repairs or rehabilitation to return them to near original condition. The neighborhoods themselves have other environmental conditions, which, if not treated soon, may cause further deterioration, such that extensive redevelopment will become necessary.

The Conservation portion of the Master Plan indicates those areas of the City that are proposed to be part of a neighborhood conservation program, and proposes corrective measures to halt the further spread of blight. Thus neighborhood conservation efforts should include not only the middle aged neighborhoods which should be preserved through major conservation

treatment but also the surrounding newer neighborhoods which should be preserved and protected through minor treatment.

204.0102 Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of the City for Neighborhood Conservation Areas shall be to conserve and improve middle-aged deteriorating neighborhoods, to provide protection and improvement of the surrounding newer neighborhoods, and to achieve the objectives of the Master Plan for neighborhoods (Section 202.0100) and residential use (Section 301.0100), through plans and programs which include the following objectives:

Objectives -

1. Rehabilitate residential structures, through voluntary citizen action, in cooperation with City departments and other agencies.
2. Provide new and/or improve existing parks, playgrounds, and school facilities.
3. Improve and control the impact on neighborhoods of both through and local traffic circulation, through strategic street changes, and the provision of off-street parking.
4. Develop a more stable land use pattern through appropriate zoning district amendments, to further guide future development, eliminating the unnecessary scattering of abrasive thoroughfare commercial uses, providing only the amounts required by an economically sound land use pattern.
5. Encourage the grouping of retail and service uses in shopping centers with adequate parking, wherever feasible.
6. Remove badly dilapidated structures, alley dwellings, and abrasive non-conforming uses.
7. Develop buffer zones between residential uses and abrasive non-residential uses.
8. Improve street and alley lighting, resurfacing, and other municipal services.

204.0103 Procedures and Priorities

The Neighborhood Conservation Areas were established after a thorough three-phase survey of the whole city. The first part of the survey considered the condition of housing and social and environmental factors, and tentatively classified the City into development, conservation, rehabilitation, and redevelopment areas. A detailed block-by-block physical survey was then carried out in the 55 Master Plan neighborhoods classified as conservation-

major improvement areas. An analysis of population, income, home ownership, overcrowding of housing, average rentals, social organization, and neighborhood services and facilities was also done. Pilot major improvement conservation areas were selected from these first priority neighborhoods for action programs using federal and local funds. Subsequently, seven other neighborhoods were added as conservation-major improvement areas.

The adjoining newer neighborhoods, generally forming a broad band outside the major improvement neighborhoods should also be preserved and protected through a minor improvement conservation program.

204.0104 Residential

Neighborhood conservation areas are designated by the Master Plan to continue in residential use. The removal of dilapidated structures and abrasive uses, and the improvement of local facilities and services will help reduce the overall residential densities of neighborhoods to the range proposed in the Master Plan.

204.0105 Residential Services

Residential service uses in conservation areas - education, recreation, local shopping, and local institutions - should be evaluated in terms of Master Plan policies and standards, and funding priorities, to serve as a basis for conservation program actions.

204.0180 Other Policies Relating to Conservation

Refer to Article 103 Summary, Section 202.0100 Neighborhood Unit Pattern and Section 202.0200 Community Pattern; Section 203.0100 Future General Land Use; and Article 204 Urban Change, for other city-wide policies that specifically relate to Neighborhood Conservation Areas. Chapter III Urban Systems Policies and Chapter IV Urban Areas Policies, provide further information that relates, more generally, to Neighborhood Conservation Areas. General Master Plan standards, applying to the city as a whole are specifically amended for the Model Neighborhood area by Section 402.0205.

204.0190 The Map

For current information see the map in the City Plan Commission offices entitled Neighborhood Conservation Areas - Detroit Master Plan, and the Future General Land Use - Detroit Master Plan map included at the back of this document.

The Neighborhood Conservation Areas map shows those middle-aged neighborhoods that are proposed for major improvement in a neighborhood conservation program and the surrounding newer neighborhoods proposed for minor improvement. Policies for the redevelopment of the adjoining inner portion of the City are described in Section 204.0200 Redevelopment.

204.0200 REDEVELOPMENT

* STATUS - The City Plan Commission, the Detroit Housing Commission, the Mayor's Committee for Community Renewal, the Mayor's Committee for Industrial and Commercial Development and a large number of citizens have cooperated in the planning for this section of the Master Plan.

The Redevelopment section was originally adopted as part of the Master Plan by Common Council on July 22, 1947 (J.C.C., p. 1929). A comprehensive revision of the redevelopment section of the plan entitled Redevelopment Study, Selection of Areas and Assignment of Priorities (June 1954) was adopted on February 15, 1955 (J.C.C., p. 240). Since then, revisions have been made to reflect changes in redevelopment needs, and priorities.

204.0201 Definition and Scope

Deterioration of the older portion of the city is a widely recognized fact. This deterioration is of twofold character:

1. On the one hand it represents the obsolescent decay of individual structures.
2. On the other it represents the deterioration of the whole environment, intrusion of commerce, industry and traffic and other detracting influences into older residential areas.

There are undoubtedly some situations in which this deterioration may be checked by rebuilding or renovation of individual buildings, or by minor street changes or public improvements. Partial renovation or improvement of a neighborhood is referred to as rehabilitation.

In some areas individual buildings are so badly deteriorated, and the general environment so blighted that the areas must be cleared, replanned and re-built in a wholesale manner. This process of clearance and rebuilding is known as redevelopment. The redevelopment plan refers to those areas in the city which are now or will in the future be ripe for rebuilding.

204.0202 Objectives and Procedures

The redevelopment plan has three aspects:

1. To determine the areas for clearance and rebuilding.

2. To establish what use these areas are most suited to under the Master Plan, and their relation to freeways, thoroughfares, recreation areas or other public improvements.
3. To determine the boundaries of sites suitable for rebuilding.

There are no sharply defined conditions which establish the need for rebuilding, but rather the accumulation of many factors, frequently interacting upon each other. These include the deterioration and obsolescence of individual structures, the mixture of industry and commerce with residential neighborhoods and a street pattern which encourages through traffic on residential streets.

204.0203 Residential Redevelopment

The framework of neighborhoods is the first controlling factor in outlining sites for residential rebuilding. The boundaries, the local street pattern and playground or other local improvements must be based on the needs of the neighborhood as a whole.

Thoroughfares or freeways are obvious boundaries for rebuilding areas. The replanning of an area for rebuilding can obviously not be carried out if rebuilding sites either straddle or fall short of major thoroughfares as external boundaries. In the first situation the project would be broken into two fragments. In the second it would be rimmed by blocks of old houses and stores in deteriorated condition.

The practice of rebuilding the core of a slum area and leaving a fringe of unreconstructed commercial and apartment buildings along a major thoroughfare has been found quite unsatisfactory. Without a "front door" on a major thoroughfare, residents must pass through blight to get to their homes in the rebuilt area. Surrounded by deterioration and slums the redevelopment area fails to create a new environment.

However, it does not follow that the neighborhood must itself be the building unit. In general, neighborhoods are larger areas than can be conveniently cleared and rebuilt as a single operation. Both the experience of the federal low-rent housing program and the projects advanced by private builders suggest units of a smaller scale. For this reason each neighborhood has been divided into several building sites each containing several city blocks. These rebuilding units may be bounded by local park strips, secondary thoroughfares or by the thoroughfares, freeways or large recreation areas as shown in the Master Plan.

204.0204 Recreation Needs

Some portions of the areas to be cleared for redevelopment will be needed for recreational purposes. The recreation plan shows locations of playfields and parks which are needed.

The redevelopment plan includes as "To be developed for public recreation purposes" those sites in the recreation plan which are within areas suitable for clearance and redevelopment.

204.0205 Industrial Redevelopment

Clearance for industrial redevelopment presents several problems distinctly different from residential redevelopment. The major difference is that the areas to be rebuilt are already partially in industrial use. Some existing industries are ready to expand at their present sites if land can be made available.

The pockets of housing in the industrial districts represent the net area to be cleared. These houses and apartments are blighted in their present surroundings, but it will inflict an unnecessary hardship on these residents and owners to permit a further changeover without providing some procedure to provide justice and equity while speeding up the process. Simply to zone these areas for industry is to make changeover inevitable from the householders standpoint, yet it does not materially help the industrialists to assemble a site large enough for his purposes.

Neither is the position of the householder protected if the city assists industrial expansion by piecemeal condemnation. Until all houses are cleared, the remaining householders are in a progressively worse position from each changeover.

From the standpoint of the industrialist, the district into which he is moving should have:

1. Sites of a size suitable for present building and later expansion if needed;
2. Access from major thoroughfares without bottlenecks of narrow residential streets; and
3. The possibility of railroad siding in some cases.

For these reasons, industrial districts have been planned with an assumption that all non-industrial buildings in a site will

be acquired and cleared more or less as a simultaneous operation, and that necessary local street and railroad improvements will be made as an incidental part of the site preparation. Until this takes place the residents should be protected through provisions of the zoning ordinance.

Since the cleared areas will normally be used not by a single but by several different industries operating independently, there is little likelihood that whole redevelopment areas will be absorbed immediately upon clearance. The redevelopment agency must undertake the operation in the expectation that portions of a redevelopment area must be held until industries can utilize them.

204.0206 Analysis of Redevelopment Program by Priority

The whole redevelopment program was divided into Priority One, Two, and Three portions based on the Capital Improvement Program. Each portion should be accomplished within its time period.

The factors which were used in setting the priority to be given to any one redevelopment area were:

- (1) Order of rank based on survey of structural and environmental condition.
- (2) Redevelopment plans already under way.
- (3) The application of planning considerations.
 - a) Carrying out other objectives of the Master Plan which have a high priority in the City's Capital Improvement Plan.
 - b) The unfolding of redevelopment in logical sequence, and site selection based on well balanced land use pattern within the priority program.
- (4) The total amount of acreage within each priority was limited by potential financing under the six year Capital Improvement Program.

Based on financial analysis, it was found that it should be possible to redevelop 956 acres in the first phase of the program, 1369 in the second phase, and 1645 in the last phase. This leaves 4011 acres, all in fourth rank areas, which fall beyond the first three phases of the redevelopment program. These fourth rank

areas are called Borderline Redevelopment.

Priority One includes all those projects presently under way which immediately surround or are in the Central Business District, including Central Business District Projects 1, 3, and 5, Lafayette Park, and Elmwood 1 and 2. In addition, areas near Michigan Avenue, such as West Side #1 Project, carry along the development of this thoroughfare as a "gateway to the city." Areas near Brewster-Douglas Public Housing, and a needed playfield site just north of the Central Business District, including Wholesale Distribution Center Projects 1 and 2, Medical Center Projects 1 and 2, and Forest Park 1 and 2, are also Priority One.

Priority Two areas include the West Side #2 Project and continue the "gateway" idea along Michigan Avenue and carry it west to the Ambassador Bridge. Also included are sites close to the Detroit and Rouge Rivers for possible port expansion. Priority Two also completes an East Side Neighborhood with the Elmwood #3 Project and provides a link between the East and near North Side Redevelopment Areas. A new area North of Hamtramck is included along with three isolated housing areas just south of Grand Boulevard.

Priority Three areas complete a ring of redevelopment around the Central Business District. Downriver industrial sites are included as well as many industrial sites bordering on railroads in all sectors of the central area of the City. One large residential site on the East Side is contained within this priority. The Myrtle-Humboldt, Ash-Humboldt, Seldon Court, and Calumet Projects have been undertaken to provide a relocation resource for housing low and moderate income families.

As completion is approached in redevelopment under this program, it would be logical at such time to again apply priorities to the Borderline Redevelopment areas along with any new areas uncovered through further study.

204.0280 Other Policies Relating to Redevelopment

Refer to Article 103 Summary, Section 202.0100 Neighborhood Unit Pattern and Section 202.0200 Community Pattern; Section 203.0100 Future General Land Use; and other Sections of Article 204, Urban Change, for other city-wide policies that specifically relate to Redevelopment. Chapter III Urban Systems Policies and Chapter IV Urban Areas Policies, provide further information that relates, more generally, to Redevelopment. General Master Plan standards, applying to the city as a whole are specifically amended for the Model Neighborhood area by Section 402.0205.

204.0290 The Map

For current information see the map in the City Plan Commission offices entitled Residential Redevelopment Priorities - Detroit Master Plan. The map shows both existing residential areas suited for redevelopment, and areas in the process of redevelopment, classified into first, second, and third priority, and a fourth rank entitled borderline redevelopment. The proposed reuse for land to be cleared under this program is described in Section 203.0100 Future General Land Use.